United Nations

Press Release

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General expresses hope that cease-fire in Yugoslavia will hold until peaceful solution is found; will meet with Lord Carrington and Cyrus Vance tomorrow.

- Director-General of International Atomic Energy Agency confirms that inspection team in Iraq uncovered documents which show that Iraq was well advanced in nuclear weapons production.

- General Assembly hears statements by Foreign Ministers of Dominica, Bahamas, Solomon Islands and Sudan, as well as by Chairman of Military Council and Council of Ministers of Lesotho and by Permanent Representative of Lithuania.

- United Nations receives check from United States Government for some $180 million towards the regular budget.

- Secretary-General opens session of Special High-Level Council of International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar told correspondents this morning that he was pleased that the cease-fire in Yugoslavia was holding and that he hoped it would last until a peaceful solution was found.

In reply to a question about what the role of Cyrus Vance would be, the Secretary-General said he had asked Mr. Vance to be his Personal Envoy to be able to get independent information "and not be informed through the papers". Mr. Vance would join him in a meeting tomorrow with Lord Carrington, in order to see how the United Nations could help in bringing about a peaceful solution in Yugoslavia.

The Security Council had asked the Secretary-General in a resolution adopted on 25 September to consult with the Government of Yugoslavia and the

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European Community, and to report to the Council.

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The Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed that the last inspection team in Iraq uncovered documents which contained conclusive evidence that Iraq was "well-advanced in the production of a nuclear weapon".

At a press conference at United Nations yesterday afternoon, IAEA head Hans Blix said the inspectors discovered active plans for the production of Lithium 6 -- a substance used to produce hydrogen bombs.

The IAEA team, which uncovered some 45,000 pages of documents on Iraq's nuclear development programme, was detained for four days in a Baghdad parking lot last month.

According to Mr. Blix, the documents will not be fully scanned and translated for weeks. Meanwhile, a preliminary report was presented to the Security Council yesterday.

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Opening this morning's debate in the General Assembly, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Dominica, Brian Alleyne, drew attention to the problem of the international traffic in narcotic drugs to which, he said, the Caribbean region was particularly vulnerable. He suggested that, as a deterrent, the international community try and stabilize the price for the narrow band of commodities on which most developing countries depended to make it more attractive for peasants to grow such traditional export crops as coffee, cocoa, bananas, than to grow marijuana, coca or opium poppies.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Public Personnel of the Bahamas, Clement T. Maynard, told the Assembly that his country remained deeply concerned by its continued lack of access to international resources on a concessionary basis and its exclusion from official development assistance. Therefore, he said, the Bahamas welcomed the enterprise of the American initiatives whose proposals on the management of external debt, investment promotion, trade liberalization and environment were critical to the development of countries in the region. The Bahamas encouraged other developed countries to take similar initiatives.

In his statement, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Solomon Islands, Sir Peter Kenilorea, expressed the concern of his Government at the steady deterioration of the environmental quality in the South Pacific, saying that it was the industrialized nations that were mainly responsible for the destruction of the natural habitat of the region. The island countries of the Pacific especially, he said, were looking forward to a successful outcome of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil. In the meantime, they were playing an active role within a group alliance of small island States at the United Nations -- AOSIS -- in making

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recommendations for the Conference at the various meetings preparing that event.

In his statement, Major-General Elias Phisoana Ramaema, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Lesotho, said his country and the Southern African region had not lived in isolation from the current international climate of peace and reconciliation. He stressed that diplomatic efforts in Angola and Mozambique, however tenuous, had made breakthroughs that put the people of Lesotho's neighbours on a firm path towards peace.

However, he said, Lesotho remained concerned about the unpredictable and volatile situation in South Africa. The General cited the uncertainties generated by continuing widespread violence there which, he said, had been compounded by the "faltering progress" made towards negotiating a constitution for a truly democratic South Africa. He called on the parties in South Africa to live up to the responsibilities of their historic mission for the future of South Africa.

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, Ali Ahmed Sahloul, told the Assembly that all the allegations made to the effect that half of the population of his country would starve were without foundation. The international community had played a role in relieving disaster problems in the Sudan and he expressed appreciation for the "Lifeline" projects. His Government would do what it could to smooth relief operations and to provide food, despite the fact that most of those returning refugees were carrying weapons to be used against his Government. Further, he said, while the Sudan supported the ongoing Lifeline projects, its sovereignty had to be respected.

The Permanent Representative of Lithuania, Anicetas Simutis, expressed his country's gratitude to the Governments, in particular Iceland and the other Nordic countries, that had contributed to the independence of his nation.

Freedom was not easy, he said; Lithuania's national economy was entering an intense period of reconstruction and reorganization after years of central planning and neglect.

Lithuania was now enduring the terrible consequences of careless development and disregard for the environment. Pollution levels and waste residue were reaching alarming levels, and less than a hundred miles from the capital, the Ignalina nuclear power station had serious safety problems.

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A United Nations spokesman announced today that the Organization had received from the United States Government a check for $181,044,000 towards the regular budget. Two days ago, on 7 October, the United Nations had received a check from the United States for $6,062,715. The Secretary-General was to address the General Assembly's Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) on the question of the United Nations financial crisis tomorrow.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar today reaffirmed his conviction that hundreds of millions of people can be protected from tragedy and that major setbacks to economic development can be avoided through world-wide effort for disaster reduction.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar was addressing the inaugural meeting of the Special High-Level Council of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction today, which is being observed as the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. The Decade aims to reduce the loss of life, property damage and the social and economic disruption caused by floods, landslides, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, drought, desertification and other calamities of a natural origin.

In his opening address, the Secretary-General said natural disasters have consequences which go far beyond their immediate economic impact and often set back the process of economic development for many years. He stressed the importance of public awareness particularly in disaster-prone countries, and that of the development of early warning systems.

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